

# Skilts School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Andrew Hewston
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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

Skilts is a Residential Special School for primary age boys with emotional, social and behaviour difficulties and associated learning difficulties, operated by Birmingham Local Authority Children's Services.

It is situated in the countryside just outside Redditch in Worcestershire; approximately five miles from the Birmingham boundary. The school is in a main, older building and there are two modern residential houses, each with two wings. They are Seal and Otter, Owl and Woodpecker.

It is open on weekdays and term time only. Residential pupils stay for anything up to four nights a week, depending on their needs. Children are usually placed at the school by Birmingham and have usually experienced major difficulties in mainstream schools or other settings; are likely to have experienced exclusion on either a temporary or permanent basis and therefore have had time out of regular school.

Of the current 56 children at Skilts, 27 use the overnight residential service at some time during each week, though only three were in residence on the first night of the inspection. Each child is assigned to one of four residential houses. All children report to the residential houses first thing in the morning, can have breakfast if they want and start the school day from there, eat lunch in one of the houses and go home from their house unit in taxis to their own homes.

### Summary

This was an announced inspection of the residential facility at Skilts Residential School and was completed over a two day period. The inspection consisted of discussions with the staff team and young people, as well as examination of both school and individual's documentation.

The inspection shows that children are cared for very well within the school, with all outcomes being of either a good or outstanding level. Staff work well with the children, and the residential provision has an experienced and well trained staff team, that is led by a dedicated Head of Care.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were raised at the last inspection, the first regarding the need to ensure two references are sought prior to staff starting work has been fully completed. The second recommendation regarding the storage of specific controlled medication has not been responded to fully at the time of the inspection.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Skilts ensures that all children are supported with being healthy and the school has achieved the healthy schools award. Individual health plans are well written and form part of the whole care plan for children. The school nurse visits children on a weekly basis and is also available for staff to discuss issues relating to individual children. The school nurse is also involved with

some training for staff and completes a medication audit. Medication administration is well co-ordinated, with appropriate recording of all medication given to young people. Staff also complete a medication audit on a monthly basis to ensure that the recording systems are correct. Appropriate consents have been received from parents regarding the administration of medication and for the use of first aid. The school continues to store controlled medication with other medications, as opposed to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society guidance. There are sufficient first aid trained staff available each evening.

The school has good links to additional health services to support children, including the Children and Mental Health Service (CAMHS) who attend termly meetings regarding concerns over individual children.

Children enjoy a good range of healthy foods, with a nutritional assessment being completed on each meal served to the young people. A recent health and safety of the kitchens resulted in the school achieving a gold standard. In a children's survey completed, the vast majority of children state that they enjoy the food served at Skilts. Mealtimes are well organised, and although noisy at times, all children have time to sit with staff and enjoy their meals. Specific diets are catered for for children and staff, and bread and butter and a choice of drink is also available on all tables for each meal. New governmental guidance limiting some of the foods able to be served appears to have resulted in some young people now bringing packed lunches into school, but guidance is given to parents regarding the foods suggested for these. All staff involved with the preparation and serving of food in the evening have completed food hygiene training.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their privacy at the school, with each child having their own bedroom, and records being stored appropriately. Children are able to use a telephone that is placed within a private area and the care plan is able to record any restrictions relating to children's communication.

Complaints procedures within the school and residential facilities are appropriate, and children show an awareness of who they can talk to if they are unhappy. The recent children's survey shows that over 80% of the children are confident in making mistakes. Complaints recordings are well kept and include outcomes of all complaints. Complaints and concerns regarding safeguarding issues are forwarded to the Head of Care and dealt with. There is a system in place for forwarding information relating to serious complaints to Ofsted.

Staff have a good awareness of the school's safeguarding procedures, and all concerns or referrals are fully recorded. All staff that have any contact with children have received training in safeguarding. The Head of Care has a good awareness of the appropriate routes for referring concerns, including who to talk to to gain additional advice. Safeguarding concerns also link into additional 'concern' meetings held within school on a regular basis.

Arrangements to protect children from bullying behaviours are strong within the school. The policy regarding bullying has been rewritten since the last inspection and the school has also developed an anti-bullying email address that children can write to if they have any concerns. Information regarding what is bullying and how this is a negative thing, is available throughout

the school and residential areas. Support is given to the victims of bullying, and to the perpetrators in an attempt to decrease bullying behaviours.

Appropriate procedures are in place to respond to absconding behaviours. Incidents of leaving the school site without permission are very low.

Children's positive behaviour is promoted throughout their time in school and residence. This is supported by differing points or rewards systems in each of the residential units. Incidents requiring restraint are well recorded within the school's system, which is also in line with the expectations of the standard. Records are well written by staff and then checked and collated by the Head of Care. All staff have received training in the use of restraint alongside the use of distraction techniques. The school has a number of staff that are trained to be trainers in restraint techniques. Other methods of additional control including the use of sanctions are also recorded within the residential units. Specific patterns of increased use of additional measures of control are monitored by staff.

Health and safety areas are well monitored and serviced. The building services supervisor has developed a thorough checklist of necessary areas to be maintained and keeps good, clear records. All fire safety checks and drills are completed in a timely fashion.

The school follows safe recruitment procedures, ensuring all adults that have access to children in an unsupervised role have full enhanced checks completed, as well as references and full application forms where necessary. Staff files contain a recruitment checklist to ensure all necessary areas have been examined. Although staff state the identification of staff is checked prior to working within the school, sufficient information is not recorded in any way within staff files. This practice is new to the school, as they previously kept all required information as per the standard.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Good links are in place to ensure that children's development in school is holistic and includes both education and the residential experience. Staff within both school and residence offer differing support roles in both areas, ensuring that issues within school and residence are communicated. Care plans are also linked to educational development areas. The residential environment includes facilities to support children's learning into the evenings. The new home school liaison staff member also ensures that information regarding the child's school experience is able to be forwarded home if necessary. Evidence within children's residential files shows that the residential staff have an input into individual education plans.

The residential provision has a flexible approach towards activities in the evenings, with activities often being child-led rather than a specific evening plan. This system appears to work, and there is evidence to show that children are involved in a good range of evening activities, including some off site. The recent children's survey suggests that almost 90% of children enjoy the activities that take place in the evenings. Pupil to staff ratios are high to allow group or individualised work with the children.

Children receive individualised support from the staff within school, and additional support from external parties when necessary. The 'Children Causing Concern' meetings held on a fortnightly basis effectively highlight any areas of additional support that are necessary for

individuals, and how this can be offered. The highly individualised 'About Me' document, completed by the young person with staff, and forming part of the child's plan, shows that there is a high awareness of meeting the needs perceived by the children, as well as those identified by the staff. There is no current independent visitor to the residential provision, although the Head of Care is attempting to find someone who can fulfil this role.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are supported in contributing to decision making during their time at Skilts, through the planning process within the care plans and through additional meetings held within school and residence. The school has a school council, with members being voted on by their peers and members are enthusiastic about areas they have developed. Recordings of children's meetings vary in their depth across the school site, but there is an overarching awareness within the staff team to listen and respond to the opinions of children. Recordings within individual children's files show that staff have good discussions with children in residence.

Planning of care in residence is well recorded, with good evidence of specific targets that are being worked towards to develop areas regarding both the education and behaviour of the children. The quality of target setting across the site varies, with some being overly vague, but all show that there is an impetus to develop the children in a positive way. There are target summaries which show if specific targets set have been achieved, this is a clear indication of the positive development of individuals.

There are good links between the school and the children's homes. This has been enhanced since the last inspection with the appointment of a home school liaison member, who is able to discuss how links are being developed between the two areas. This appointment also allows for increased home visits and individualised support to the children's families. Recordings within children's files show that children are able to keep in regular contact with their families, and there are a range of recordings of staff also keeping family members aware of their child's development.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Children live in accommodation that is appropriately furnished and well maintained. Children enjoy well-decorated individual bedrooms, which have some personalisation. Communal areas are shared with day pupils prior to school, during the lunchtime and immediately after school, although no child stated that this was a problem. Communal areas within the three residential units are decorated and used in different ways, this allows for children to move within the differing units, to an extent, in the evenings to be involved with differing activities.

Staff sleep in close to the bedrooms of the young people, and staff are available at night, should there be a specific need. Some alarms are used on bedroom doors to ensure the safety of the young people and their peers, although the specific permissions necessary for this practice are not all in place within the children's files.

The children are able to enjoy the pleasant rural setting that the school is within, including activities in nearby woods.

## Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school has a statement of purpose that clearly defines life at Skilts and what to expect from the residential experience. The school is well staffed to meet the needs of the children, with staffing patterns being clear within the staffing policy.

Staff within the residential areas are well trained and have a wealth of experience to support and meet the needs of the children. The school has a thorough induction programme to develop good practice by the staff team, this is followed up by a range of training including the NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Staff are able to clearly explain how they are working with children. The Head of Care is also well qualified and shows a high level of commitment and passion for the role and the development of the children.

Staff are appropriately supported through a formalised supervision structure. Staff state that they feel well supported by the schools management team, and that the Head of Care is available to discuss a range of issues whenever necessary. Staff have not had an annual appraisal or performance management meeting since the last inspection due to ongoing union discussion.

Systems within the school are effectively monitored by the senior management team and such monitoring is in line with, and sometimes exceeding, the expectations of the standard. The school is visited on a half termly basis by a member of the governing body, although there are no specific reports relating to these visits completed by the visitor.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The cook ensures that individual needs are catered for. The staff team show a good awareness of the differing needs of the young people relating to both preferences and their ability and in turn respond to these needs effectively. This is shown through effective planning and recording of targets for young people. The staff team are able to discuss how the school promotes diversity within the residential provision.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve the medication policy and procedure to ensure that specific medications are stored in accordance with good practice guidance from a qualified health professional. (NMS 14)
- ensure there are verifiable checks of identity such as passport or birth certificate within staff files (NMS 27.1)
- ensure the school identifies an independent visitor for the children (NMS 22.8)



- ensure appropriate permissions are in place for the use of auditory alarms within the children's accommodation (NMS 23.7)
- ensure all staff have annual appraisals and individual development plans (NMS 30.6).